DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY P Schmelzer DATE 7/2/85
RDS [X] YES [ ] EXT. DATE
[illegible] REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS [ ]
DECLASSIFIED [ ] RELEASE [X]
RELEASE DENIED [ ]
PA OF FOI EXEMPTIONS

R Seafort MR

646

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

June 26, 1985

Dear Senator Johnston:

The Secretary has asked me to reply to your letter of May 13 concerning the proposed sale to Saudi Arabia of F-15 air defense equipment and AWACS.

The Administration is aware of the concerns you and other members of Congress have expressed concerning this proposed sale. We intend to respond fully to Congressional questions about this sale during the Congressional review period. We hope that members of Congress will refrain from taking a position on the proposed sale until the Administration has had the opportunity to explain fully why we think that this sale is in the U.S. national interest.

The Department has not responded in writing to the questions posed by Senator Byrd concerning this sale. Senator Byrd's questions were complex and required a detailed analysis prior to sending a written response. Moreover, the questions related to aspects of the sale which have not yet been fully worked out with the Saudis. As an interim step, the Department has offered to provide an oral briefing to Senator Byrd on the general points that he raised. When a written reply to Senator Byrd has been sent, we will most certainly provide you a copy.

In your letter you raised two particular questions -- the security of AWACS technology, and the use to which AWACS data will be put. We are taking a number of steps to ensure that sensitive technology associated with AWACS and other systems to be provided to the Saudis will be protected. Furthermore, we do not intend to install a number of sensitive subsystems. We will be implementing detailed security measures to provide for the protection of AWACS and other U.S. systems in Saudi Arabia. These will include provisions for joint periodic security inspections of Saudi facilities. Such security agreements will be in place before any sensitive technologies are transferred to the Saudis.

AWACS is primarily a flying radar system. It is not equipped to gather intelligence information. It does not possess radio monitoring, photo reconnaissance, or other intelligence gathering capabilities. Thus, there will be no "intelligence data" per se collected by AWACS. The aircraft would detect

The Honorable
J. Bennett Johnston,
United States Senate.

aircraft movements in the area to which it is deployed -- especially near Saudi Arabia's vital oil installations along its eastern coast. AWACS' data could not be used effectively with the combat aircraft of other countries without extensive joint planning, training and secure communications equipment which the other Arab countries do not possess.

We expect that as part of our broader security relationship with Saudi Arabia, we will be cooperating closely with the Saudis in these AWACS operations. We are currently discussing with the Saudis the modalities of AWACS operations, with a view toward responding to our security needs and maximizing the joint security benefits of the sale.

I hope this information will be useful in meeting some of your concerns. We anticipate responding to other concerns regarding this proposed sale during the Congressional review period. We would be happy to arrange a meeting with you to discuss this issue if you so desire.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Fairbanks
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Drafted: NEA/ARP: MRAfietti
6/23/81:x23121

Clearances: NEA/ARP: RHPelletreau
INR:LCarter
PM:DOchmanek
S/P:DRoss
H: GMartin

ACDA: EFinegold
NEA/IAI:JWTwinam
T:RAherne